Günter Frank, Felix Mundt (eds.), *Der Philosoph Melanchthon* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter), 2012. ISBN 978-3-11-026098-4.

The publisher suggests

> Wilhelm Dilthey and Hans-Georg Gadamer were probably the last great scholars who had taken Philipp Melanchthon seriously as a philosopher. In the 20th century interest was almost exclusively restricted to his role in the history of the Reformation. However, in recent decades the situation has changed greatly. Melanchthon has aroused general interest in the field of the history of science and education, as well as in individual disciplines such as research on dialectics and rhetoric. In this volume Melanchthon is presented for the first time as a universal scholar and so made accessible to a broader public.

Is Melanchthon here presented as a universal scholar and made accessible to a broader public as such? Indeed he is. If the aim of the editors and publisher was to open a window on a fairly arcane aspect of Melanchthon's work, they surely succeeded most grandly.

The essays here collected are the result of a conference held on October 28-29, 2010 at the Free University of Berlin. And the aim of the collection is stated thusly by the editors-

> Die Herausgeber hoffen, der philosophischen Melanchthonforschung durch die folgenden Beiträge neue Impulse zu verleihen (p. V).

Philosophers and theologians with a philosophical bent or interest are here called to reconsider, or perhaps consider for the first time, the contributions to philosophy made by Melanchthon.

The papers presented at the conference and collected here are nine in number by as many contributors and they cover such topics as Melanchthon's ethics, Melanchthon and Cicero, Melanchthon as poet, and, very interestingly, portraits of Melanchthon from the

16th-19th centuries. Each of the essays is in German and readers will wish to know that in advance.

The contributors, on the whole, are very helpful in shedding light on Melanchthon's ideas. So, for example, Anne Eusterschulte, while discussing the notion of 'Wahlfreiheit' as the foundation of Melanchthon's ethics, writes

> Nicht nur ist Melanchthons Aneignungsweise antiker Theoreme praktischer Philosophie theologisch fundiert, sondern fließen in die theologischen Schriften ethische Interpretamente antiker Provenienz ein.... der Freiheitsproblematik als zentrale Frage der praktischen Philosophie im Horizont des ‚humanistischen' Bildungs-Impetus des Lehrers Melanchthon verorten (pp. 12-13).

Günter Frank writes, in connection with his description of Melanchthon as the 'Ethicist of the Reformation,'

> Es ist hier and dieser Stelle weder möglich noch notwendig, die Komplexität der topik als eines wissenschaftlichen Verfahrens in ihrer Überlieferungsgeschichte darzulegen (p. 61).

And so the entire volume too is just a 'dipping the tip of the finger' in the water (as it were). Focus is maintained but not every aspect of the topic can be engaged because the topic is so impressively massive. It is here, I think, that forward movement and further study of this aspect of Melanchthon's thought is encouraged. The surface has barely been scratched in these papers and further work isn't only desirable, it's essential.

Impressive, finally, is the learnedness of the contributions. Thorsten Fuchs' examination of the poetry of Melanchthon is an astonishing accomplishment not only because it reveals a little known aspect of Melanchthon's oeuvre, but because Fuchs' ability to contextualize and illuminate are exceptional.

Here, for your enjoyment, are a few lines:

> Corda fide laudet Christus lucentia vera,
> Quaeque Deum fuci nescia rite colunt,
> et monachorum odit fraudes simulataque vota;
> non iniussa Deus sacra probare solet.
>
> Haec expendemus, si forte lidebit adesse,
> cras etenim nobis curia nostra patet.
> O utinam simili consensu Ecclesia ubique
> ut nos ac una voce Deum celebrat (p. 100).

The value of this collection is precisely in the fact that it takes readers into a strange new land where they have never before journeyed and there they discover, or rather have

divulged to them, wondrous and incredible delights. Melancthon the philosopher. Indeed!

Tolle, lege!

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